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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

Monday, November 25, 1940

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "NUT NOTES." Information from the Bureau of Agricultural Marketing Service and the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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The news today is about nuts. And high time, too, with holiday time so close, and nuts a favorite food for holiday festivities.

Here are some tips direct from the U. S. Department of Agriculture to help you in buying and using nuts.

To begin with, you might like to hear about the size of the 1940 nut crops. In general, the nut trees were bearing well this fall, though the total of the 4 most important tree nut crops is not so large as last year's figure. Pecans made the headlines this year with a crop of almost 86 million pounds. So more pecans will be on the market this year than last, and plenty were for sale last year. Here's a little word to the wise housewife. If your family is fond of pecan rolls and bread, or pecan pie, or those delicious southern candies that go by the name of pralines (pronounced praw-leens) this is the year to indulge.

But to get back to the nut crops-- Both English walnuts and filberts came in with a crop larger than average though not so large as last year's. The only one of the commercially important tree nuts below average this fall is the almond. The 1940 almond crop is 660 tons smaller than the almond crop a year ago.

As for the many wild nuts and nuts growing in small orchards, no one makes a business of getting figures on them. But as most farm families know, these native wild nuts are usually just as delicious and nourishing and just as useful in cooking as the nuts grown commercially.

Here are a few tips on buying nuts. Housewives often ask whether to buy nuts shelled or in the shell. Nuts in the shell cost less by the pound than shelled nuts. And nuts in the shell are less liable to contamination. On the other hand, nuts already shelled save you time, and labor, and storage space. And when you count the weight of the shell and compare prices, you may find that shelled nuts are actually cheaper. Time was when shelled nuts were more likely to be stale than unshelled nuts. But you can now buy shelled nuts in vacuum-packed containers that prevent them from becoming stale. By the way, that stale taste in nuts comes when the oil in the kernels is rancid. Storing nuts in a cool, dark place helps keep them fresh. Nut meats keep better in a tight container.

So much for buying and keeping nuts. Now about using them. Let's take the pecan as an illustration, since the pecan crop was such a large one this year. Pecans, like many other nuts, are favorites for breads and cakes. You can use chopped pecans in almost any recipe for biscuits, muffins, waffles, or cookies. But perhaps because pecans are rich and have a flavor that combines well with sugar, the famous pecan dishes are hearty and sweet.

Pecan rolls are one of these treats. People with an appetite for hot sweet bread will usually tell you that a well-made pecan roll is a delicacy hard to beat. To make pecan rolls you spread brown sugar, butter, and chopped pecans over white yeast dough, then roll like a jelly roll, cut, and finally bake the rolls with brown sugar and halves of pecans on the outside.

Another rich sweet pecan treat that hails from the South but is now famous the country over is pecan pie. The filling of this pie is a rich mixture of eggs, sugar, corn sirup and butter or other fat. You spread a layer of pecans on unbaked pie crust in the bottom of the pan. Then you pour in the rich, sweet filling, and bake slowly for almost an hour. As the pie bakes, the nuts rise to the top of the filling and make a crusted layer.

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While we're on the subject of famous food treats made with pecans, let's not forget pralines. You have often seen these creamy, brown, flat cakes filled with nuts, if you haven't made them yourself. French cooks in Louisiana invented pralines. Even the name is French. It refers to the brown color of the candy. Like most other pecan treats from the South, pralines are very rich and sweet. They're made from sugar, salt, cream and pecan nut meats. And one trick in making them is to cook part of the sugar with the cream, and part alone in a frying pan until it turns to brown caramel. Then the cream sirup goes into the caramel, and the mixture cooked to the soft-ball stage. After cooking, cool, and then beat until the mixture just begins to be creamy. The nuts are beaten in last, and the candy is dropped by spoonfuls on waxed paper to cool and harden in flat round cakes.

Rolls, and pie, and candy are just three of the many dishes you can make from pecans--and other nuts. You can also use nuts for making croquettes, and stuffings, and baked loaves for the main dish at the meal. As we said before, nuts will go in almost any recipe for bread, cake or cookies. Nuts are excellent in salad, and sandwich filling, in pastry, and ice cream.

You can find the recipes for all these uses in a free publication of the U. S. Department of Agriculture. Send a postcard for Miscellaneous Publication No. 302 called "Nuts and Ways to Use Them." Address your postcard to the U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C.

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